

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

OCI No. 3021/63

14 October 1963

**VIETNAMESE SUMMARY SUPPLEMENT**  
(Information as of 1100 EDT)

1. Madame Nhu today is to have lunch at the New York Times and then fly to Boston for appearances at Radcliffe College and Harvard University.

2. Yesterday, on NBC's "Meet the Press," she said tension exists between the US and the Diem regime "because we are more strongly anti-Communist than you....Your government is following the new fashion of liberalism which is much closer to Communism than we are...Perhaps we could get along if we were a little softer on Communism."

She complained again that USIS officials in Saigon had worked and were still working to overthrow the Diem regime, and speculated that this was overzealous implementation of orders from Washington to look for a replacement government. USIS representatives, she said, openly ask people "Are you pro-coup or anti-coup?"

"We always try to follow all advice that is good for both sides," she said, "but we do not know what we should do." South Vietnam, she said, had never been told officially what it should do to win the approval of Washington, but had been told unofficially by unspecified officials that she and her husband should be exiled. That, she said, would be "absolutely ridiculous," since neither of them holds any official position, and the people, believing they were deserting Diem, would be demoralized.

She said she had not seen her brother-in-law, President Diem, for five months, and had deliberately omitted her customary call to ask his permission to leave the country so that he could not be accused of having sent her as an official spokesman.

Madame Nhu denied claims that 80 percent of the South Vietnamese are Buddhists, asserting that the country's principal religion is Confucianism. She cited a 1962 book by the leaders of the Buddhist movement which estimated that only one million of South Vietnam's 40 million people are Buddhists.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3. Before the broadcast, she met one of the members of the panel, NBC correspondent John Sharkey, who had his head bandaged and his hand in a cast. When she asked what had happened, Sharkey answered: "I was beaten up by your secret police ...We had a film of the monk burning, and three of us were beaten." (The incident took place during the latest Buddhist suicide in Saigon on 4 October.) Mme. Nhu remarked "I'm very sorry, and I hope you'll recover soon." There was no mention of the incident on the television show. The preceding day, she had told newsmen she did not know the facts of the case, but that "our people do not beat anybody, especially Americans, without some reason....I can assure you that if any of our people are guilty, they will be punished."

4. Her father Tran Van Chuong, appearing on a CBS "Face The Nation" program for which she had originally been scheduled, took issue with the findings of Secretary McNamara and General Taylor that the Viet Cong can be defeated by 1965. "I want to be on record," he said, "that there is no possibility at all of victory against the Communists under the present regime in South Vietnam."

5. Madame Nhu got what was described as the first warm and enthusiastic reception of her trip Friday afternoon at Fordham University. After a "roaring" welcome by an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 students, she told an audience of 1,500 students and faculty members in the gymnasium that since nearly all the people of her country are armed, the absence of any uprising proves that the regime has strong popular support. She said she had not been criticizing President Kennedy Wednesday but was trying to help when she remarked the US was being lulled into false security on the Communist issue. She complained her government had been treated as if "we are dogs that must be drowned because we are mad."

6. She was cheered again Saturday by a capacity audience of 800 in Columbia University's McMillin Theater, but a crowd of 300 demonstrating outside as she arrived tossed eggs and pieces of chalk at her car without scoring any hits. The demonstration was sufficiently boisterous to cause the city's Commissioner of Public Events, Richard Patterson Jr., to call on her at her hotel Sunday

morning to assure her that all necessary police protection would be provided. Madame Nhu, however, appeared unperturbed.

7. Her Columbia speech apparently contained nothing sufficiently new to be reported, but later, at a tea for reporters held in lieu of granting innumerable requests for private interviews, she expressed the belief that former Ambassador Nolting had been recalled a year ahead of time because he believed the Diem regime's version of its difficulties with Buddhists and other opposition elements. After Nolting's recall, she said, Chargé Truehart said the regime would have to achieve a conciliation with the Buddhists or "be disassociated" from the US. Truehart attributed this intervention, she said, to the proximity of US elections.

Madame Nhu, noting that the Buddhist crisis began on 8 May when Buddhists at Hué demanded the "right" to fly the Buddhist flag, said there had never been any law to prevent them from doing so--only a 1957 decree requiring that precedence be given the national flag. She cited this as evidence that the entire Buddhist crisis was a Communist attempt to embarrass the regime. Ambassador Nolting, she said, had had the same opinion.

Madame Nhu rated her US press treatment to date "comme ci, comme ça," but said she had been "deeply moved and pleasantly surprised" by the hundreds of encouraging letters she has received since her arrival here, offering "good advice" and urging her to disregard criticism.

8. Daughter Le Thuy apparently took in one movie Friday night, and, escorted by an unidentified young man and another couple, saw "How the West Was Won" Saturday night and continued on to a Times Square nightspot featuring a New Orleans jazz ensemble but no dancing. A family spokesman said she came in about midnight; the AP logged her in at 2 a.m. Next morning she shrugged over the jazz, as her mother explained that she liked "serenity." Madame Nhu dined at a nightclub Saturday night and was in at 11 p.m. She has shown no recurrence of her exhaustion at Sarah Lawrence College Thursday. Sunday morning, after her visit from Commissioner Patterson and a talk with Congressman Ogden Reid, she attended Mass at St. Agnes.